REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 6, 2015

TO: Dan R. Dill, District Ranger, Mad River Ranger District, Six Rivers National Forest

FROM: Becky Gravenmier, Acting Forest Service REO Representative to the RIEC

SUBJECT: Regional Ecosystem Office Review of the Dobbyn Creek Sudden Oak Death Treatment, Mad River Ranger District, Six Rivers National Forest

Summary: The Regional Ecosystem Office (REO) interagency Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Work Group has concluded its review of the documents provided by the Forest regarding proposed sudden oak death (SOD) treatments in the Eel River Late Successional Reserve (LSR 307), Mad River Ranger District, Six Rivers National Forest. The REO, based upon review by the LSR Work Group, concurs with the Forest in its finding of consistency with the Standards and Guidelines (S&G) under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) for the Dobbyn Creek Sudden Oak Death Treatment Project.

Basis for the Review: Silviculture, risk reduction, and salvage treatments in LSRs are subject to REO review under the NWFP S&Gs (C-12-15). As required by the NWFP S&Gs (C-11), the Forest prepared a Late-Successional Reserve Assessment (LSRA), which was reviewed and found to be consistent under the NWFP S&Gs (C-11). The SOD treatment came before the LSR Workgroup for review because treatment of SOD was not covered in the LSRA.

Background and Project Description: *Phytophthora ramorum*, the cause of Sudden Oak Death (SOD), is an aggressive non-native pathogen that threatens the ecological integrity of tanoak forests in the north coast mountains in northwestern California. SOD is subject to both state (CCR-3700) and federal (7 CFR 301.92) quarantine regulations. Since the mid-1990s, SOD has killed millions of tanoak trees and several oak tree species (coast live oak, California black oak, Shreve oak, and canyon live oak), and caused twig and foliar diseases in numerous other plant species, including California bay laurel, Douglas-fir, and coast redwood. The disease was first detected in Humboldt County in 2002 near Redway and continues to spread. In late 2013 SOD was confirmed on BLM land adjacent to the Six Rivers and was assumed it may be on the Forest but undetected. In September 2014, the disease was confirmed in tanoaks and California bay growing on the Mad River Ranger District on the Six Rivers National Forest following aerial detection for symptomatic trees. The new site is located approximately ¼ mile northeast of the positive SOD detected on the BLM in 2013 (see attached map), T3S, R6E, NW ¼ of the NW ¼ Section 5, Humboldt Meridian.

The Six Rivers National Forest has the plant hosts, the climatic conditions preferred by the pathogen, and many potential pathways for its movement, therefore, the risk for damage to mixed-evergreen woodlands appears high. If the disease were to become established in coastal wildland forests, SOD would likely pose an especially great hazard to tanoak ecosystems in coastal northwest California. In native northwest California forests, tanoaks (as well as the other host plants growing in coastal forests) are important species for wildlife habitat and food sources, especially deer and bear.

Consequently, should the *P. ramorum* pathogen spread unchecked, loss of the mature tanoak component in mixed-evergreen woodlands and damage to other plants, may result in degraded habitat conditions, and increased surface-fuel loading and concomitant increased resistance to control of fires over a large area. All of these potential outcomes would be detrimental to the attainment of forest management objectives and ecological functioning.

The stands to be treated have an overstory of 30 to 40" dbh Douglas-fir trees. The understory is almost completely tanoak and bay laurel.

Based on the extent of the disease the proposed treatment includes:

- Falling all tanoak and California bay greater than 1" diameter-breast-height on about 30 acres (100 meter buffer around infected tanoak) and applying herbicides into cambium layer of the cut stumps.
- Cutting, piling, and burning resulting tanoak slash on about 30 acres.
- Injecting herbicides into bay and tanoak utilizing a "hack-n-squirt" method on approximately 220 acres (400 meter buffer) adjacent to core treatment area.

The 400 meter buffer includes buffering infected trees on BLM land where treatment is currently not planned.

Review of the Project: The LSR Work Group reviewed the proposed action and purpose and need for the Dobbyn Creek SOD Treatment. Members of the LSR Work Group also met via conference call with Jeff Jones, forest silviculturist, on June 30, 2015. Emails between the Forest and LSR Workgroup members clarified the extent and rationale for the project. The Work Group's review was based on information obtained from these resources.

The interagency LSR Work Group review concluded that the proposed treatment is consistent with Standard and Guidelines for Risk Reduction Projects in LSRs (C-12-13). Treatments in older stands are appropriate in this situation for the following reasons (NWFP S&Gs C-13):

- The result of the management activities will clearly result in greater assurance of long-term maintenance of habitat.
- The activities are clearly needed to reduce risks.
- The activities will not prevent the LSR from playing an effective role in the objectives for which they were established.

Conclusion: Based on the interagency REO LSR Work Group's review of relevant documentation and discussion with Six Rivers NF staff, the REO concurs with the Forest's conclusion that the Dobbyn Creek SOD Treatment Project is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan.

If you have questions regarding this review, please contact Kim Mellen-McLean at 503-808-2677.

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